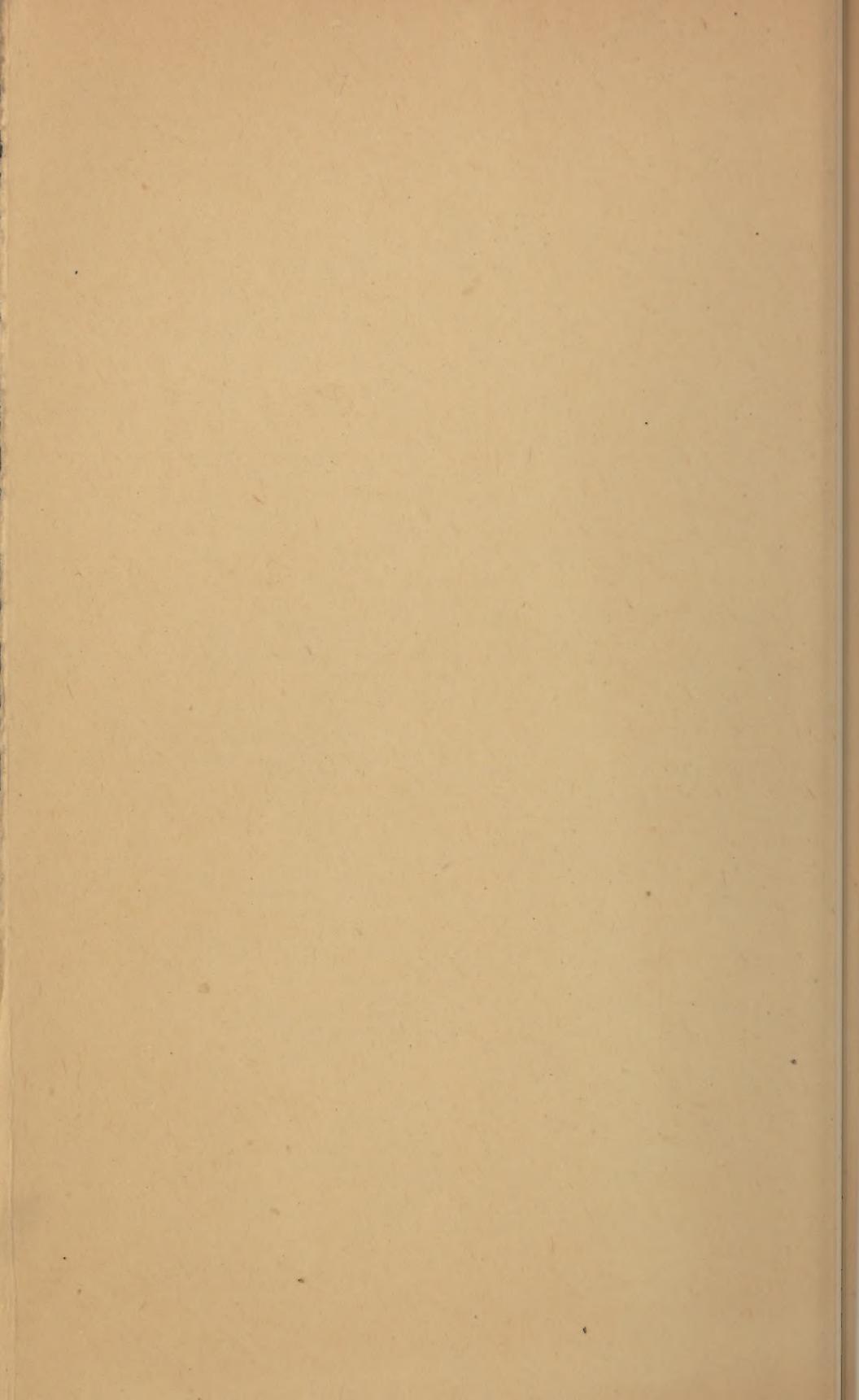


MURRAY(D.)

Eulogy upon
Jacob P. Mosher —





Murray (D.)

EULOGY

UPON

JACOB P. MOSHER, M. D.,

DELIVERED BY

DAVID MURRAY, LL. D.,

BEFORE THE ALUMNI OF THE ALBANY MEDICAL COLLEGE,
MARCH 5, 1881.

MR. PRESIDENT — It was my great and particular privilege to have known Dr. Mosher during a large part of his and my life. And though others have known more of his professional character and attainments, and can give a far better estimate of his services as a practitioner and teacher of medicine, I may be permitted from my long intimacy with him to say a few words, chiefly in reference to the opinion which was held of him outside of his profession.

In the first place, however, I will say that I have no idea that a man can be really a great physician, who is not at the same time much more than a physician. I do not deny that you may find a high degree of skill in special branches of the profession, combined with rough manners and an immoral life. But in this profession, more perhaps than in any other, for its highest and best types, we demand not only intelligence and ability, but the manners and instincts of a gentleman. In him who is to be admitted to the most sacred recesses of our homes, to be entrusted with our most precious and cherished secrets, to see us in our periods of weakness and agony, we want not only the skill which science may confer, but the gentle and thoughtful ministrations which spring from a kind heart. Now these are the qualities which we prize in every position in life. They are what make up not only the acceptable physician, but equally in every other vocation and relation of life the men whom we respect and cherish. With these qualities, I think we will all say that Dr. Mosher was in a very high degree endowed.

Take first his intellectual characteristics. For myself I have met few men who in force or quality of thought were his superiors. That great mass of brain, sixty-four ounces, was not given to him for nothing. Many of you know how shrewd and penetrating was his mental insight; how keen was his scent in tracking a fallacy; how dexterously, when a clever adversary was forcing him into a false position, he could double on his pursuer and make good his escape. It was this quick wit, this nimble dialectic skill, which rendered him the most delightful companion in an intellectual symposium. It was when the cares of his profession were laid aside, when the worries and disappointments of life, and sometimes its appointments too, were forgotten, and he could settle down with congenial spirits for free and unrestrained



discourse.—it was then that Dr. Mosher was seen at his best. It was then that you began to learn something of the marvelous resources of his mind and the treasures which he had gathered from books and men. You would wonder how and where he had found so many rare and forgotten works, and still more that he had found time to cull so much of their contents. It was then, that you discovered unexpected nooks of sunshine and shadow in his character; his love of the woods, his passionate enjoyment of the sea, his fine and appreciative taste in art, his reverence for the good, his disdain of conventionalities, his noble fidelity to friends and truth and manhood.

There was in his character a vein of bohemianism which attracted to him men in literature and art. They were quick to discover the freshness and originality of his nature. They gathered from his rich and affluent discourse suggestive facts and fancies. They found in him a stimulus to their intellectual activity, and he found in them a bright and genial companionship which lightened his labor and gave him relief from the strain of a busy life.

I have often regretted that a man of his fine and original talent had not expended a part of it in authorship. Whatever he said was always so well said, whatever he wrote was so well conceived and executed, that we may wish he had given a more enduring form to the results of his studies. But authorship requires leisure and privacy, and these Dr. Mosher could not command, or never had the hardihood to pluck out of the endless occupations which friendship and professional engagements and public concerns pressed upon him.

Then consider for a moment his scientific attainments. I do not refer now so much to his achievements in the science of medicine. Of these there are others who can speak authoritatively. I think we can distinguish between a good physician and a scientific physician. The practice of medicine, even in the estimation of its most brilliant experts is largely, perhaps chiefly, empirical. Our knowledge of remedies is, I suppose, principally the result of experience. We know little of the chemical and physical reactions that take place in the human system in its healthy state, and still less of those which follow the administration of remedial agencies. It is no discredit even to a good physician that he is unable to describe the *rationale* of the treatment that he uses. But Dr. Mosher was more than a good physician; he was what we may distinctively call a scientific physician. That is, his natural bent was to look for the reasons of things, and in consequence for the reasons of disease and its rational and logical treatment. I have no doubt that this tendency grew in part out of the fact that before he was a doctor he was a teacher of science. He was a trained and skillful analytical chemist. What he saw going on in his retorts and test-tubes, he sought for in the occult and complicated organisms of the human body.

He had what Huxley has well designated the scientific imagination. He could picture to himself with rare precision what disease really was and what changes it was effecting, and he could follow with the same scientific insight the action by which remedies combat disease.

I do not mean that he could always and unmistakably follow these subtle processes of nature; no man can do that. But he belonged to that limited and select band of men whose minds run in this direction — a band from whom the great investigators of science and the successful promoters of human knowledge are invariably developed. He was well in the advance in his knowledge of all the great and fertile scientific theories by which the empire of remedial and preventive medicine has been so signally enlarged. He was quick, for instance, to seize upon and follow up the gerin theory of disease. He saw its application in explaining the mystery of epidemics, the dangers of contagion and the value and importance of sanitary appliances. I trace his highest achievements, his greatest services to humanity, to that alert scientific apprehension which was so marked a characteristic of his mental processes. And it is one of the most distinct and commensurable elements in our estimate of the loss which his death has caused, that out of this choice and elect band of pioneers in science, so valiant a champion has been taken, and a voice so clear and potent has been silenced.

Then let me say a word as to Dr. Mosher's social qualities. I use the term to include the varied relations which a man holds to his kindred, to the community of which he forms a part, and to the State. This is of course almost the highest aspect in which we can regard the man. Here you see his whole character tested. He is no longer living for himself, but his life and interests and influences are all indissolubly combined and interlaced with those of his fellows. Tried by such tests and under such varied conditions Dr. Mosher reached a high standard. His moral perceptions were delicate; his sense of personal honor exacting. His integrity of word and promise and purpose was unchallenged. His bearing was generous and cordial. He had beyond most men a facility in dealing with others. He knew instinctively the characters of men and never gave offense by undue or arrogant self-assertion. He had Benjamin Franklin's rare gift of winning men to his views by insinuating and suggesting his arguments, and knew how to avoid the opposition which comes from direct and positive statement. For these reasons Dr. Mosher had the essential qualities of a successful public man. He had the politician's ready insight into the motives of men, and tact in securing their confidence and adhesion. He always retained the cordial personal regard of those opposed to him. He knew the value of friends in the enemy's camp and never provoked unnecessary hostility. These were qualifications which rendered him an admirable and valuable public servant. In all the trusts which he held, I am sure his associates will testify to his almost ideal fitness for their best performance. He was wise and calm and self-reliant. He was not elated by success nor disturbed by failure. He gave time and thought, more than he could well spare, to the tasks which others devolved upon him. And the days were not long enough for the numberless services which he was ready to undertake in behalf of objects which he had at heart.

MR. PRESIDENT: I feel that in all I have so far said I have not yet really touched the secret springs which admit us into Dr. Mosher's character. After all it is not his intellectual gifts, nor his scientific methods and achievements, nor his varied social and political talents, which constitute the real man.

Before we are prepared to pass judgment on a character we must penetrate to its inner motives. When these are low and selfish, the possession of the most brilliant genius will not rescue the man from our contempt. On the contrary, the high and holy purpose, the unselfish consecration of effort to the good of mankind, can lift even mean abilities into the region of the grand. It is love which in the end leads all the virtues. "Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." He that has not charity is nothing, only sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. In the last analysis of the man if we find not in him.

" * * * * * A tear for pity,
And a hand open as day for melting charity."

we cast him out and remand him to the domain of forgetfulness.

It was after all the attributes of his moral nature which made Dr. Mosher what he really was to us. His benevolence was bounded only by the hours in the day. In a profession which appeals incessantly to the sensibilities of its members, he was pre-eminently the kind and sympathetic physician. To the poor and the unfortunate he ministered as faithfully and willingly as to the rich. Into homes where anxious hearts watched and waited, and over which the wings of the angel of death were fluttering, he came not only with the skill to avert the calamity, but with the cheerful and reassuring sympathy which inspired confidence and made recovery possible. It was a belief in his unselfish heart, as much as in his professional skill, which brought to him not only the sick, but the discouraged and the unfortunate. It was gratitude for such services that filled so many hearts with grief at his death. When the poor woman in her agony over the loss of her friend and her physician, invaded the very presence chamber of death and cried to God to bring him back to her and sick child, she spoke for thousands who felt the same desolation.

When Socrates was building for himself a house in Athens, it was criticised

because it was too mean and small for so great a man. He replied with that grim humor which was characteristic of him, that he would consider himself amply accommodated, if he were able to see even this small house filled with true friends. Were we like Socrates to measure our houses by the number of true friends that we can gather into them, they might often be smaller than they are. The metal of which the true friend is made is rare and precious. Happy is he who has found and won such a friend. Sad and bitter is that day when he finds himself stripped of his riches and reduced to the penury of friendlessness. How many of you deemed yourselves richer for this man's friendship, stronger and better in the protecting shadow of his manhood! And how many felt when he died that they had lost a dear and precious possession!

Who will forget that morning in August, when the news of Dr. Mosher's death was spread through the street? It was like the cry that went up in Egypt when in every house the first-born was found dead. The workmen at the capitol heard it and the busy din of hammers was still. With choking voice friend told it to friend. Men at the market heard it and with unfilled baskets hurried home to impart the sad intelligence. Messenger boys with wings to their feet sped with it from street to street. Telephone and telegraph caught up the sound and carried it from house to house and from city to city. And from every home where his visits had so often brought hope and joy and benediction one universal wail of sorrow went up.

Can it be true? Mosher dead, the strong, active and copious man! Was it not but yesterday that we saw him alert and busy with his wonted tasks? He had planned for himself what was the greatest pleasure of his yearly routine of life. Much as he loved his work, his profession and his studies, no man enjoyed more than he that recreation which labor earns for itself and deserves. Nature by sharp but kindly warnings urged him to seek release from toil. The refreshing shade of the woods, the cool sound of the plashing oar, the distant baying of the hounds beckoned him away from the hot and dusty town. Dear friends were waiting for him. Like the mother of Sisera from her lattice they watched for his coming and wondered that he came not. He had put his house in order. He had given thought and attention to every public concern. He had entrusted his patients to careful and skillful hands. With tender solicitude for those to whom he was both mother and father, he had arranged plans for his children's summer diversions. He had spent many hours of the night in writing needful letters. His last was written in behalf of a lonely girl, who was preparing to sail for Germany, soliciting from the captain of the steamer kindness and consideration for her on her voyage. At last every thing was done. He was ready for to-morrow's journey. He put aside his finished tasks and sought the repose which his protracted labors made welcome. And it came. The wearied man sank into that peaceful sleep which God giveth to his beloved. And then — we know not when — but without a struggle, without a moment of interval he "passed from the repose of sleep into the repose of death." The heart which had battled with an unseen and unsuspected malady surrendered and ceased to beat. To that busy and overtaxed brain, which in life knew no rest, there came the profound and mysterious rest of death.

And I beheld, and lo! in the silence of the night a swift and shining messenger came and stood by his bedside.

And he stooped down and touched the sleeper and whispered softly in his ear.

And it was as though he had heard a summons from some sick bed, as it were the cry of some suffering child, calling for him.

For lo! he rose up quickly and followed the shining messenger in haste out into the darkness, and I saw him no more.

